



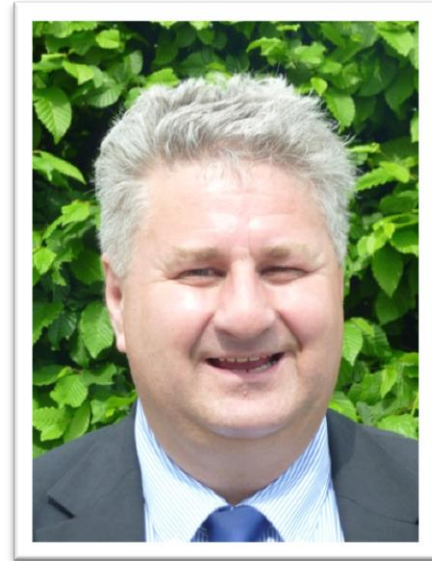
THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF  
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

## EUROPRIS INTERVIEW

### Christian Schnattler

EuroPris talks with Christian Schnattler Head of Department of Prison Administration, Federal Ministry of Justice Austria

Christian Schnattler is the Head of Department of Prison Administration Austria. He has a PhD in Law from the Karl Franzens University in Graz and began his career in 1992 with a traineeship for judge at the Appellate Court Vienna, where he also worked as judge until 1997. Since he started working at the Federal Ministry of Justice Austria in 1997, Christian Schnattler held positions as consultant on criminal law legislation, head of department of infrastructural matters and head of department of prison administration.



**EuroPris** Could you tell us about your career path? Why have you chosen to work in the prison and correctional field?

**Christian Schnattler** I am gradually grown into the prison administration. My main motivation then to decide for the prison administration, was the various human aspects that play an important role in this field.

**How many Prison establishments do you oversee?**

In Austria, there are a total of 27 prisons, of which 15 (16) court prison houses that are set up at the headquarters of the district courts' jurisdiction in criminal matters. The tasks of the 15 (16) Judicial prisoners houses are mainly the enforcement of detention and imprisonment up to 18 months' imprisonment, as well as sporadically administrative detention.

- 7 prisons especially for men. Tasks: first of all enforcement of criminal detention for 18 months to life imprisonment;
- 1 penal institution especially for women;
- 2 institutions for mentally ill offenders accountable incompetent;
- 1 for mentally abnormal offenders, including a sane assessment station for sexual offenders;
- 1 institution for the treatment of drug addicts and
- 1 special prison especially for young males.

In addition, there are 13 branches of the prisons, which are set up in part as so-half open houses or as agricultural holdings (economies).



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF  
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

### **How many prisoners are in prison at the moment in Austria?**

At 28.02.2014 in the Austrian prisons were 8,918 persons in custody. Thereof 8,361 men, 557 women, 114 juveniles and 412 young adults.

### **How many staff do you manage?**

In the prisons around 3,700 staff is employed. Of these employees inside are around 3,150 prison officers and the remaining 550 are civil servants of the so-called care services (chaplain, hospital doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists Interior, nurses and ward assistants interior and other prison staff from special branches of training).

### **What are in your opinion the required attributes and qualifications of someone wanting to be a prison officer?**

He should have a balanced personality with empathy and a concern for social commitment and mainly be resilient.

### **What is the biggest concern with regards to security in prisons in your country?**

At the moment especially mobile (smart) phones and the high rate of foreign prisoners.

### **What do you consider to be the biggest achievements for your service in 2013? What challenges you had to overcome?**

I think our biggest achievement in 2013 was to improve our crisis management and our biggest challenge was to upgrade the prison conditions for juveniles in our biggest court house prison in Vienna.

### **What are the challenges for your service this year?**

As in the last years, to manage the situation at the border to overcrowding with reduced resources.

### **In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges for the European prison and correctional services at the moment?**

I think within Europe there are regional differences in this concern. But the integration, the ability of electronic media to communicate with the outside world, in an acceptable form in the daily prison life is certainly a challenge that will occupy all European prison administrations either way.



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF  
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

**What benefits do you see being linked as a Member to an organisation such as EuroPris?**

I believe that the information and experience exchange and the ability to be able to compare different approaches are the most valuable benefits of being linked to an organisation such as EuroPris.

**Do your prisons engage with NGO's / Charities?**

Yes, the Austrian prison administration traditionally cooperates with such organizations from the prison chaplaincy to the help for ex-offenders. The inclusion of volunteer citizens in the social reintegration of prisoners is an essential link between penal and civil society for me.

**What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in the correctional field?**

The most gratifying is the high commitment of my staff and the most unpleasant malicious personal conflicts for me. Most satisfying I find the combination of strategic and operational work. Most challenging the high complexity of everyday work in prison. I like the daily challenge of the work in the correctional field and I do not like the low value society gives to the correctional field.

**If you could be remembered for one thing whilst being in charge what would it be?**

The fact that I kept an eye on the sense of proportion, issue-orientation and also the aspect of humanity in prison.